

1 — Meal Patterns

Schools and institutions that participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) and must comply with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) regulations and policies for school meals. Meals offered in the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) of the NSLP follow the NSLP and SBP meal pattern requirements. The USDA's meal patterns for grades K-12 are defined by the final rule, *Nutrition Standards for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs* (77 FR 4088), as required by the [Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010](#) (Public Law 111-296).



The lunch and breakfast meal patterns for grades K-12 use a food-based menu planning approach and include three required grade groups (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12). The meal patterns for each grade group require daily and weekly amounts of five food components for lunch (milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat/meat alternates) and three food components for breakfast (milk, fruits, and grains). In addition, the average weekly nutrition content of all lunches for each grade group, and separately for all breakfasts for each grade group, must meet the USDA's dietary specifications (nutrition standards). For more information, refer to “[Dietary Specifications](#)” in this section.

On a weekly average, the lunch meal patterns are designed to provide approximately one-third of children's total daily calories and other key nutrients. The breakfast meal patterns are designed to provide approximately one-fourth of children's total daily calories and key nutrients.

Reimbursable Meals

The NSLP and SBP meal patterns consist of minimum daily and weekly servings of food components for each grade group. Meals served to children are eligible for USDA reimbursement when they contain the minimum serving of each required food component. Reimbursable meals may also contain additional foods, such as condiments, or larger servings of the required food components. However, menu planners should consider the appropriateness of additional foods based on children's nutrition needs. For more information, refer to “[Additional Foods](#)” in this section.

Food components and food items

A food component is one of the five food groups that comprise reimbursable meals, including milk, fruits, vegetables, grains, and meat/meat alternates. Table 1-1 indicates the required daily servings of each food component for the NSLP and SBP meal patterns.

Menu items contribute to the food components. A menu item is any planned main dish, vegetable, fruit, bread, grain, or milk; and may contribute to one or more food components. For example, a hamburger (meat/meat alternates component) on a whole-grain bun (grains component) is one menu item that contributes to two food components.

Each component has specific crediting requirements. All foods (commercial products, foods made on site by the school food authority (SFA), and foods prepared by vendors) must meet these requirements to credit as a component of reimbursable meals and snacks. For more information on the crediting requirements, refer to section 3.

Table 1-1. Required daily servings of food components in the NSLP and SBP	
Lunch	Breakfast
Five food components ¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One serving of milk ² • One serving of fruits • One serving of vegetables • One serving of grains ³ • One serving of meat/meat alternates 	Three food components ^{1, 4} <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One serving of milk ² • One serving of fruits (or optional vegetable substitutions) • One serving of grains (or optional meat/meat alternate substitutions) ^{3, 5}
<p>¹ A serving is the minimum daily amount for each grade group specified in the NSLP and SBP meal patterns.</p> <p>² Allowable types of milk include unflavored low-fat milk and unflavored or flavored fat-free milk. SFAs must offer at least two different choices.</p> <p>³ Grains must be whole grain-rich (WGR).</p> <p>⁴ These are the SBP meal pattern requirements without offer versus serve (OVS). Different requirements apply when SFAs implement OVS at breakfast. For more information, refer to the CSDE's Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals.</p> <p>⁵ SFAs may substitute 1 ounce equivalent of the meat/meat alternates component for 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component after offering 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component.</p>	

Required Servings

The NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 require minimum daily and weekly servings of each food component. These requirements are summarized below.

Daily requirements

The daily requirements are the minimum amounts that SFAs must offer for each of the five food components for lunch and each of the three food components for breakfast. Meals that contain less than the minimum daily amount of any component do not meet the meal patterns. For example, the SBP meal pattern requires 1 cup of fruit for all grades. If a breakfast menu contains less than 1 cup of fruit, the meal is not reimbursable.

Weekly requirements

For the fruits component, vegetables component, and milk component, the weekly requirements are the sum of the daily requirements. For example, the daily milk requirement for lunch and breakfast is 1 cup, and the weekly milk requirement for a five-day lunch or breakfast menu is 5 cups. However, the weekly requirements for the grains component and meat/meat alternates component are different for each grade group.

- **Grades 9-12 at lunch:** The weekly requirements for the grains component and meat/meat alternates component are the sum of the daily requirements.
- **Grades K-5 and 6-8 at lunch and breakfast, and grades 9-12 at breakfast:** The weekly requirements for the grains component and meat/meat alternates component are more than the sum of the daily requirements. To meet the weekly requirements, SFAs must serve **more** than the minimum daily requirement of grains and meat/meat alternates on some days. For example, the minimum daily grains cannot be less than 1¾ ounce equivalents for grades K-5 and 6-8, or less than 2 ounce equivalents for grades 9-12. For more information, refer to “Weekly Grains and Meat/Meat Alternates at Lunch” and “Weekly Grains at Breakfast” in section 4.

Meals may include additional foods or larger amounts of any component if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications for calories, saturated fats, trans fat, and sodium. For more information, refer to “[Additional Foods](#)” in this section.

Dietary Specifications

The dietary specifications are the USDA's nutrition standards for reimbursable meals in the NSLP and SBP. They are located at the bottom of the meal pattern charts, just under the required food components and serving sizes (refer to the five- and seven-day lunch and breakfast meal pattern charts in this section).

The average weekly nutrition content of all lunches for each grade group, and separately for all breakfasts for each grade group, must meet the dietary specifications for calories (minimum and maximum levels), saturated fats (less than 10 percent of calories), and sodium. In addition, the Nutrition Facts labels and manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fats per serving for all food products and ingredients used to prepare school meals.

For information on planning school meals to meet the dietary specifications, refer to section 6. For resources on the dietary specifications, visit the “[Dietary Specifications \(Nutrition Standards for School Meals\)](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Proposed change to trans fats

In January 2020, the USDA issued the proposed rule, *[Simplifying Meal Service and Monitoring Requirements in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs](#)* (85 FR 4094). Among other changes, this rule proposed to remove trans fats as a dietary specification. The USDA indicates that the trans fat dietary specification is no longer needed because the FDA enacted regulations to eliminate partially hydrogenated oils from the food supply. For more information, refer to the USDA’s [Proposed Rules: Simplifying Meal Service and Monitoring Requirements in the NSLP and SBP](#) webpage.

Note: As of the date of this publication, the USDA has not finalized the proposed rule to remove the trans fat dietary specification. Until a final rule is approved, the dietary specifications for school meals still include trans fats. For more information, refer to “Trans Fat Requirement for School Meals” in section 6.



Shorter or Longer Weeks

The meal patterns for the NSLP and SBP are based on a five-day week. When a school or institution regularly operates on a shorter or longer week, menu planners must increase or decrease the weekly requirements by 20 percent for each day that deviates from the standard five-day week.

The daily requirements and dietary specifications are unaffected by longer or shorter weeks. Since the dietary specifications are daily averages, the number days are averaged together to meet the specified targets for calories, saturated fats, and sodium. The CSDE's resource, [Menu Planning for Shorter or Longer Weeks](#), provides guidance for SFAs that regularly operate for three, four, or six days.



Menu modifications are required only if the school or institution regularly operates for a shorter or longer week. Schools and institutions with occasional decreases in the school week due to holidays, snow days, or other reasons are not required to adjust the weekly requirements. However, menus must be consistent with the intent of the meal patterns. For example, menu planners must ensure that lunch menus do not consistently fail to offer certain vegetable subgroups.

The majority of Connecticut schools and institutions regularly operate on a five-day week. Some schools and institutions, such as residential child care institutions (RCCIs), regularly operate on a seven-day week.

The meal patterns for four-day, five-day, and seven-day weeks are available on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. For three-day and six-day meal patterns, refer to Appendix 2C in the USDA's guide, [Menu Planner for School Meals](#).

Overview of Lunch Meal Patterns

This section summarizes the requirements for the NSLP meal patterns. For information on the required records for documenting meal pattern compliance, refer to section 2. For guidance on the crediting requirements for each food component, refer to section 3.

- **Required components:** Lunches must include one serving of the milk component, one serving of the meat/meat alternates component, one serving of the vegetables component, one serving of the fruits component, and one serving of the grains component. The serving offered for each component must be at least the minimum quantity in the NSLP lunch meal pattern (refer to [table 1-2](#) and [table 1-3](#) in this section).
- **Milk component:** SFAs must offer at least 1 cup of milk daily for all grade groups. Allowable types of milk include unflavored low-fat milk and unflavored or flavored fat-free milk. Milk choices must include a variety (at least two different choices) and at least one choice must be unflavored. For more information, refer to “Milk Variety” in section 3.
- **Meat/meat alternates component:** SFAs must offer minimum daily and weekly ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component for each grade group. The maximum weekly limit for the meat/meat alternates is not required but provides a guide to help menus stay within the weekly calorie range. Meat/meat alternates must be served in a main dish, or in a main dish and only one other food item. For more information, refer to “Main Dish Requirement for Lunch” in section 3 and “Weekly Grains and Meat/Meat Alternates at Lunch” in section 4.
- **Grains component:** All grains must be WGR. SFAs must offer minimum daily and weekly ounce equivalents of grains for each grade group. The maximum weekly limit for the grains component is not required but provides a guide to help menus stay within the weekly calorie range. For more information, refer to “Part C: WGR Criteria” in section 3 and “Weekly Grains and Meat/Meat Alternates at Lunch” in section 4.
- **Fruits component:** SFAs must offer minimum daily and weekly servings of the fruits component, which includes fresh fruit; frozen fruit; dried fruit; canned fruit in light syrup, water, or juice; and 100 percent fruit juice. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruit (such as raisins or dried apricots) credits as twice the volume served, e.g., $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of dried fruit credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. For more information, refer to “Fruits Component” in section 3.

- **Vegetables component:** SFAs must offer minimum daily and weekly servings of the vegetables component, which includes fresh, frozen, canned, and dried vegetables; and 100 percent vegetable juice. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Dried vegetables require a PFS to indicate the reconstituted volume. Lunch menus must include specific weekly quantities of the five vegetable subgroups (dark green, red/orange, legumes, starchy, and “other”). Vegetables credit based on volume (cups), except raw leafy greens (such as lettuce and spinach); tomato paste and tomato puree; and dried or dehydrated vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix). Raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served, e.g., 1 cup credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the vegetables component. Dried or dehydrated vegetables credit based on the amount of vegetables per serving in the rehydrated volume. For more information, refer to “Vegetables Component” in section 3.
- **Juice:** Fruit juice, vegetable juice, and fruit/vegetable juice blends must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. The minimum creditable amount is $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly amount of fruits offered, and vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly amount of vegetables offered. For example, if the weekly lunch menu for grades 6-8 includes $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups of fruit, the total amount of juice served during the week cannot exceed $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups. All sources of juice served in school meals count toward the weekly limit, including juice that is fresh, frozen, and made from concentrate; frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice; pureed fruits and vegetables in fruit/vegetable smoothies; and juice from canned fruit served in 100 percent juice. For more information, refer to “Crediting Fruit Juice” and “Crediting Vegetable Juice” in section 3, and “Weekly Juice Limits at Lunch” and “Weekly Juice Limits at Breakfast” in section 4.
- **OVS:** To implement OVS at lunch, SFAs must offer all five components. For a reimbursable meal with OVS, students must select at least $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruits or vegetables and the full serving of at least two other components. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#) and visit the CSDE’s [Offer versus Serve for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

The CSDE’s resource, [Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the NSLP](#), summarizes the requirements for the lunch meal patterns.

Table 1-2 shows the five-day lunch meal pattern. SFAs that regularly operate on a seven-day week, such as RCCIs, must follow the seven-day meal pattern (refer to [table 1-3](#)). SFAs that regularly operate on three, four, or six days must follow the guidance in the CSDE’s resource, *Menu Planning for Shorter or Longer Weeks*.

For information on the optional meal patterns for schools and institutions with different grade configurations (such as a K-8 school) that prevent students from being separated into the three required grade groups at lunch, refer to “[Multiple Grade Groups](#)” in this section.

Lunch meal patterns for four-day weeks, five-day weeks, and seven-day weeks for each grade group are available on the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. For three-day and six-day meal patterns, refer to Appendix 2C in the USDA’s guide, *Menu Planner for School Meals*.



Table 1-2. Five-day lunch meal pattern

Food components ¹	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12	
	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²
Milk, fluid (cups) ³ Low-fat (1%) unflavored or fat-free unflavored or flavored	1	5	1	5	1	5
Fruits (cups) ⁴ Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits	½	2½	½	2½	1	5
Vegetables (cups) ⁵ Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetables	¾	3¾	¾	3¾	1	5
Dark green ^{5, 6}	0	½	0	½	0	½
Red/orange ^{5, 7}	0	¾	0	¾	0	1¼
Beans/peas (legumes) ^{5, 8}	0	½	0	½	0	½
Starchy ^{5, 9}	0	½	0	½	0	½
Other ^{5, 10}	0	½	0	½	0	¾
Additional vegetables to reach total ^{5, 11}	0	1	0	1	0	1½
Grains (ounce equivalents) ¹² WGR or enriched	1	8-9	1	8-10	2	10-12
Meats and meat alternates (ounce equivalents) ¹³	1	8-10	1	9-10	2	10-12
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week</i>						
Calories ^{14, 15}	550-650		600-700		750-850	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories) ¹⁵	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams) ^{15, 16}	≤ 935		≤ 1,035		≤ 1,080	
Trans fat (grams) ¹⁵	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
◀ Refer to next page for important menu planning notes ▶						

Table 1-2. Five-day lunch meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes**

- ¹ Lunches must include the minimum serving of all five components and may include larger amounts if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications. Use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the requirements. For processed foods, review the product's Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS). For more information, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) resources, [Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling Program](#), [Product Formulation Statements](#), [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Made from Scratch" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ² A week equals five days. When a school week regularly operates on a shorter or longer cycle, menu planners must increase or decrease the weekly requirements by 20 percent for each day that deviates from the standard five-day week. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Menu Planning for Shorter or Longer Weeks in the NSLP and SBP](#), and the four-day and seven-day NSLP meal patterns on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ³ Allowable types of milk include unflavored low-fat (1%) milk and unflavored or flavored fat-free milk. Flavored low-fat milk is allowed through February 18, 2022. School food authorities (SFAs) must offer at least two different varieties and at least one milk choice must be unflavored. Whole milk and reduced-fat (2%) milk cannot be served. For more information, visit the "[Milk Component for Grades K-12](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ⁴ The fruits component includes fresh fruit; frozen fruit; dried fruit; canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup; and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength fruit juice. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruits credit as twice the volume served, e.g., $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of raisins credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruit offerings. The juice limit includes all sources of juice, e.g., 100 percent juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice. For best nutrition, serve whole fruits instead of juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#) and [Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the "Fruits Component for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Table 1-2. Five-day lunch meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

- ⁵ The vegetables component includes fresh vegetables, frozen vegetables, canned vegetables, rehydrated dried vegetables, and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength vegetable juice. Vegetables credit based on volume (cups), except raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served (e.g., 1 cup credits as ½ cup of vegetables. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Dried vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit as the vegetables component based on their rehydrated volume and require a PFS. Pureed vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice. Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetable offerings. Pureed vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP](#), and visit the “Vegetables Component for Grades K-12” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ⁶ Examples of the dark green subgroup include bok choy, broccoli, collard greens, dark green leafy lettuce, kale, mesclun, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, spinach, turnip greens, and watercress.
- ⁷ Examples of the red/orange subgroup include acorn squash, butternut squash, carrots, pumpkin, tomatoes, tomato juice, and sweet potatoes.
- ⁸ Examples of the beans and peas (legumes) subgroup include black beans, black-eyed peas (mature, dry), garbanzo beans (chickpeas), kidney beans, lentils, navy beans, soybeans, split peas, and white beans. Note: Green peas, green lima beans, and green (string) beans are not legumes and are not in this subgroup.
- ⁹ Examples of the starchy subgroup include black-eyed peas (not dry), corn, cassava, green bananas, green peas, green lima beans, parsnips, plantains, taro, water chestnuts, and white potatoes.
- ¹⁰ The “other” subgroup includes all other vegetables such as artichokes, asparagus, avocado, beets, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, green beans, green peppers, iceberg lettuce, mushrooms, okra, onions, turnips, wax beans, and zucchini. The “other” vegetables requirement may be met with any additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans/peas (legumes) subgroups, but not the starchy subgroup.
- ¹¹ Any vegetable subgroup may be offered as additional vegetables to meet the total weekly vegetable requirements.
- ¹² All grains must be WGR. WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains, any remaining grains are enriched, and any noncreditable grains are less than 2 percent (¼ ounce equivalent) of the product formula. The serving size must meet the required weight or volume in the USDA’s Exhibit A chart (refer to [Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)) or provide the minimum creditable grains (refer to [Calculation Methods for Crediting Grains for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)). Menus must meet the minimum weekly ounce equivalents. The maximum weekly ounce equivalents are not required but provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#), [Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the “Grains Component for Grades K-12” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Table 1-2. Five-day lunch meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

- ¹³ Menus must meet the minimum weekly ounce equivalents. The maximum weekly ounce equivalents are not required but provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications. The serving size refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish as served, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. One ounce equivalent equals 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish; 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended); 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese (low-fat recommended); ¼ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes); ½ large egg; 2 tablespoons of nut butters; 1 ounce of nuts or seeds; ¼ cup (2.2 ounces) of commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein; 1 ounce of tempeh; 3 ounces of surimi; ½ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt; and 1 ounce of alternate protein products (APPs). APPs must meet the USDA’s requirements in [appendix A](#) of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210). Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and soy nuts. Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the “[Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ¹⁴ The lunch menu’s average daily calories for a five-day school week must be at least the minimum value but cannot exceed the maximum value.
- ¹⁵ Meals may include discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications. For information on the dietary specifications, refer to section 6 of the CSDE’s [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#), and visit the “[Dietary Specifications \(Nutrition Standards for School Meals\)](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ¹⁶ Weekly lunch menus must meet the second sodium target. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Sodium Reduction Timeline for the NSLP and SBP](#).

Table 1-3. Seven-day lunch meal pattern

Food components ¹	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12	
	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²
Milk, fluid (cups) ³ Low-fat (1%) unflavored or fat-free unflavored or flavored	1	7	1	7	1	7
Fruits (cups) ⁴ Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits	½	3½	½	3½	1	7
Vegetables (cups) ⁵ Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetables	¾	5¼	¾	5¼	1	7
Dark green ^{5, 6}	0	½	0	½	0	½
Red/orange ^{5, 7}	0	¾	0	¾	0	1¼
Beans/peas (legumes) ^{5, 8}	0	½	0	½	0	½
Starchy ^{5, 9}	0	½	0	½	0	½
Other ^{5, 10}	0	½	0	½	0	¾
Additional vegetables to reach total ^{5, 11}	0	2½	0	2½	0	3½
Grains (ounce equivalents) ¹² WGR or enriched	1	11-12½	1	11-14	2	14-17
Meats and meat alternates (ounce equivalents) ¹³	1	11-14	1	12½-14	2	14-17
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a seven-day week</i>						
Calories ^{14, 15}	550-650		600-700		750-850	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories) ¹⁵	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams) ^{15, 16}	≤ 935		≤ 1,035		≤ 1,080	
Trans fat (grams) ¹⁵	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
◀ Refer to next page for important menu planning notes ▶						

Table 1-3. Seven-day lunch meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes**

- ¹ Lunches must include the minimum serving of all five components and may include larger amounts if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications. Use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the requirements. For processed foods, review the product's Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS). For more information, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) resources, [Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling Program](#), [Product Formulation Statements](#), [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Made from Scratch" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ² A week equals seven days. This meal pattern is for schools that regularly operate on a seven-day week.
- ³ Allowable types of milk include unflavored low-fat (1%) milk and unflavored or flavored fat-free milk. Flavored low-fat milk is allowed through February 18, 2022. School food authorities (SFAs) must offer at least two different varieties and at least one milk choice must be unflavored. Whole milk and reduced-fat (2%) milk cannot be served. For more information, visit the "[Milk Component for Grades K-12](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ⁴ The fruits component includes fresh fruit; frozen fruit; dried fruit; canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup; and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength fruit juice. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruits credit as twice the volume served, e.g., $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of raisins credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the fruits component. Fruit juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruit offerings. The juice limit includes all sources of juice, e.g., 100 percent juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice. For best nutrition, serve whole fruits instead of juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#) and [Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the "[Fruits Component for Grades K-12](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ⁵ The vegetables component includes fresh vegetables, frozen vegetables, canned vegetables, rehydrated dried vegetables, and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength vegetable juice. Vegetables credit based on volume (cups), except raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served (e.g., 1 cup credits as $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables). A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Dried vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit as the vegetables component based on their rehydrated volume and require a PFS. Pureed vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice. Vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly vegetable offerings. Pureed vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP](#), and visit the "[Vegetables Component for Grades K-12](#)" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Table 1-3. Seven-day lunch meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

- ⁶ Examples of the dark green subgroup include bok choy, broccoli, collard greens, dark green leafy lettuce, kale, mesclun, mustard greens, romaine lettuce, spinach, turnip greens, and watercress.
- ⁷ Examples of the red/orange subgroup include acorn squash, butternut squash, carrots, pumpkin, tomatoes, tomato juice, and sweet potatoes.
- ⁸ Examples of the beans and peas (legumes) subgroup include black beans, black-eyed peas (mature, dry), garbanzo beans (chickpeas), kidney beans, lentils, navy beans, soybeans, split peas, and white beans. Note: Green peas, green lima beans, and green (string) beans are not legumes and are not in this subgroup.
- ⁹ Examples of the starchy subgroup include black-eyed peas (not dry), corn, cassava, green bananas, green peas, green lima beans, parsnips, plantains, taro, water chestnuts, and white potatoes.
- ¹⁰ The “other” subgroup includes all other vegetables such as artichokes, asparagus, avocado, beets, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, eggplant, green beans, green peppers, iceberg lettuce, mushrooms, okra, onions, turnips, wax beans, and zucchini. The “other” vegetables requirement may be met with any additional amounts from the dark green, red/orange, and beans/peas (legumes) subgroups, but not the starchy subgroup.
- ¹¹ Any vegetable subgroup may be offered as additional vegetables to meet the total weekly vegetable requirements.
- ¹² All grains must be WGR. WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains, any remaining grains are enriched, and any noncreditable grains are less than 2 percent ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent) of the product formula. The serving size must meet the required weight or volume in the USDA’s Exhibit A chart (refer to [Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)) or provide the minimum creditable grains (refer to [Calculation Methods for Crediting Grains for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)). Menus must meet the minimum weekly ounce equivalents. The maximum weekly ounce equivalents are not required but provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#), [Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the “Grains Component for Grades K-12” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ¹³ Menus must meet the minimum weekly ounce equivalents. The maximum weekly ounce equivalents are not required but provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications. The serving size refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish as served, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. One ounce equivalent equals 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish; 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended); 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese (low-fat recommended); $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes); $\frac{1}{2}$ large egg; 2 tablespoons of nut butters; 1 ounce of nuts or seeds; $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (2.2 ounces) of commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein; 1 ounce of tempeh; 3 ounces of surimi; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt; and 1 ounce of alternate protein

Table 1-3. Seven-day lunch meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

products (APPs). APPs must meet the USDA’s requirements in [appendix A](#) of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210). Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and soy nuts. Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resources, [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the “Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

- ¹⁴ The lunch menu’s average daily calories for a five-day school week must be at least the minimum value but cannot exceed the maximum value.
- ¹⁵ Meals may include discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications. For information on the dietary specifications, refer to section 6 of the CSDE’s [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#), and visit the “[Dietary Specifications \(Nutrition Standards for School Meals\)](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ¹⁶ Weekly lunch menus must meet the second sodium target. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Sodium Reduction Timeline for the NSLP and SBP](#).

Overview of Breakfast Meal Patterns

The information below provides an overview of the SBP meal pattern requirements. For detailed guidance on the food components, refer to section 3.

- **Required components:** Breakfasts must include one serving of the milk component; one serving of vegetables, fruits, or both; and one serving of the grains component. The serving offered for each component must be at least the minimum quantity for each grade group in the SBP meal pattern (refer to [table 1-4](#) and [table 1-5](#) in this section).
- **Milk component:** SFAs must offer at least 1 cup of milk daily for all grade groups. Allowable types of milk include unflavored low-fat milk and unflavored or flavored fat-free milk. Milk choices must include a variety (at least two different choices) and at least one choice must be unflavored. For more information, refer to “Milk Variety” in section 3.
- **Fruits component:** SFAs must offer at least 1 cup of fruit daily for all grade groups. The fruits component includes fresh fruit; frozen fruit; dried fruit; canned fruit in light syrup, water, or juice; and 100 percent fruit juice. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruit credits as twice the volume served. Vegetables may substitute for the fruits component at any breakfast. For more information, refer to “Fruits Component” and “Vegetables at Breakfast” in section 3.
- **Juice:** Fruit juice, vegetable juice, and fruit/vegetable juice blends must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. Fruit juice together with vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly amount of fruits offered at breakfast. For example, if the weekly breakfast menu for grades 6-8 includes 5 cups of fruit, juice cannot exceed 2½ cups. All sources of juice served in school meals count toward the weekly limit, including juice that is fresh, frozen, and made from concentrate; frozen juice pops made from 100 percent juice; pureed fruits and vegetables in fruit/vegetable smoothies; and juice from canned fruit served in 100 percent juice. For more information, refer to “Crediting Fruit Juice” and “Crediting Vegetable Juice” in section 3, and “Weekly Juice Limits at Lunch” and “Weekly Juice Limits at Breakfast” in section 4.
- **Grains component:** All grains must be WGR. SFAs must offer minimum daily and weekly ounce equivalents of grains for each grade group. The maximum weekly limit for the grains component is not required but provides a guide to help menus stay within the weekly calorie range. For more information, refer to “Part C: WGR



Criteria” in section 3 and “Weekly Grains and Meat/Meat Alternates at Lunch” in section 4.

- **Optional meat/meat alternates component:** The SBP meal pattern does not require the meat/meat alternates component. SFAs have two options for crediting meat/meat alternates at breakfast: 1) offering a meat/meat alternate in place of part of the grains component after offering at least 1 ounce equivalent of the grains component; or 2) offering a meat/meat alternate as an extra food that does not credit toward the SBP meal pattern. For more information, refer to “Meat/Meat Alternates at Breakfast” in section 3.
- **OVS:** To implement OVS at breakfast, SFAs must offer a minimum of four food items from the three food components, including two grains (or one grain and one meat/meat alternate substitution), one fruit, and one milk; or one grain, two fruits, and one milk. The fourth food item cannot be another serving of milk. For a reimbursable meal with OVS, students must select at least three food items including ½ cup of fruit (or vegetable substitution, if offered) and the full serving of at least two other food items. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s [Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals](#) and visit the CSDE’s [Offer versus Serve for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

The CSDE’s resource, [Overview of Menu Planning for Grades K-12 in the SBP](#), summarizes the requirements for the breakfast meal patterns.

[Table 1-4](#) shows the five-day breakfast meal pattern. SFAs that regularly operate on a seven-day week, such as RCCIs, must follow the seven-day meal pattern (refer to [table 1-5](#)). SFAs that regularly operate on three, four, or six days must follow the guidance in the CSDE’s resource, [Menu Planning for Shorter or Longer Weeks](#). For information on the optional meal patterns for schools and institutions with different grade configurations (such as a K-8 school) that prevent students from being separated into the three required grade groups at breakfast, refer to “[Multiple Grade Groups](#)” in this section.

Breakfast meal patterns for four-day weeks, five-day weeks, and seven-day weeks for each grade group are available on the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. For three-day and six-day meal patterns, refer to Appendix 2C in the USDA’s guide, [Menu Planner for School Meals](#).

Table 1-4. Five-day breakfast meal pattern

Food components ¹	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12	
	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²
Milk, fluid (cups) ³ Low-fat (1%) unflavored or fat-free unflavored or flavored	1	5	1	5	1	5
Fruits (cups) ⁴ Vegetables may be substituted for fruits ⁵ Fruit juice together with vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits ⁶	1	5	1	5	1	5
Grains (ounce equivalents) ^{7, 8} WGR or enriched	1	7-10	1	8-10	1	9-10
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week</i>						
Calories ^{9, 10}	350-500		400-550		450-600	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories) ¹⁰	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams) ^{10, 11}	≤ 485		≤ 535		≤ 570	
Trans fat (grams) ¹⁰	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
◀ Refer to next page for important menu planning notes ▶						

Table 1-4. Five-day breakfast meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes**

- ¹ Breakfasts must include the minimum serving of all three components and may include larger amounts if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications. Use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the requirements. For processed foods, review the product's Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS). For more information, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) resources, [Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling Program](#), [Product Formulation Statements](#), [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Made from Scratch" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ² A week equals five days. When a school week regularly operates on a shorter or longer cycle, menu planners must increase or decrease the weekly requirements by 20 percent for each day that deviates from the standard five-day week. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Menu Planning for Shorter or Longer Weeks in the NSLP and SBP](#), and the four-day and seven-day NSLP meal patterns on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ³ Allowable types of milk include unflavored low-fat (1%) milk and unflavored or flavored fat-free milk. Flavored low-fat milk is allowed through February 18, 2022. School food authorities (SFAs) must offer at least two different varieties and at least one milk choice must be unflavored. Whole milk and reduced-fat (2%) milk cannot be served. For more information, visit the "Milk Component for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ⁴ The fruits component includes fresh fruit; frozen fruit; dried fruit; canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup; and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength fruit juice. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruits credit as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. Pureed fruits in smoothies credit only as juice. For more information, visit the "Fruits Component for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ⁵ For school year 2021-22, any vegetables (including potatoes and other starchy vegetables) may substitute for the fruits component without including vegetables from the other subgroups in weekly menus. The vegetables component includes fresh vegetables, frozen vegetables, canned vegetables, rehydrated dried vegetables, and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength vegetable juice. Vegetables credit based on volume (cups), except raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served (e.g., 1 cup credits as ½ cup of vegetables). A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Dried vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit as the vegetables component based on their rehydrated volume and require a PFS. Pureed vegetables in

Table 1-4. Five-day breakfast meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

smoothies credit only as juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP](#), and visit the "Vegetables Component for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

- 6 Fruit juice, vegetable juice, and combination juices must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. Fruit juice together with vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruit offerings. The juice limit includes all sources of juice, e.g., 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice. For best nutrition, serve whole fruits and vegetables instead of juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#) and [Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#).
- 7 All grains must be WGR. WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains, any remaining grains are enriched, and any noncreditable grains are less than 2 percent ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent) of the product formula. The serving size must meet the required weight or volume in the USDA's Exhibit A chart (refer to [Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)) or provide the minimum creditable grains (refer to [Calculation Methods for Crediting Grains for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)). Menus must meet the minimum weekly ounce equivalents. The maximum weekly ounce equivalents are not required but provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#), [Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the "Grains Component for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- 8 The meat/meat alternates component is not required at breakfast. SFAs may substitute 1 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates for 1 ounce equivalent of grains after offering the minimum daily grains serving (1 ounce equivalent). The serving size refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish as served, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. One ounce equivalent equals 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish; 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended); 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese (low-fat recommended); $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes); $\frac{1}{2}$ large egg; 2 tablespoons of nut butters; 1 ounce of nuts or seeds; $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (2.2 ounces) of commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein; 1 ounce of tempeh; 3 ounces of surimi; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt; and 1 ounce of alternate protein products (APPs). APPs must meet the USDA's requirements in [appendix A](#) of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210). Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and soy nuts. Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources,

Table 1-4. Five-day breakfast meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP, Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP, Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP, Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP, Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP, and Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP, and visit the “Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12” section of the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

- ⁹ The breakfast menu’s average daily calories for a five-day school week must be at least the minimum value but cannot exceed the maximum value.
- ¹⁰ Meals may include discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications. For information on the dietary specifications, refer to section 6 of the CSDE’s [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#), and visit the “Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards for School Meals)” section of the CSDE’s [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ¹¹ Weekly breakfast menus must meet the second sodium target. For more information, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Sodium Reduction Timeline for the NSLP and SBP](#).

Table 1-5. Seven-day breakfast meal pattern

Food components ¹	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12	
	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²	Daily	Weekly ²
Milk, fluid (cups) ³ Low-fat (1%) unflavored or fat-free unflavored or flavored	1	7	1	7	1	7
Fruits (cups) ⁴ Vegetables may be substituted for fruits ⁵ Fruit juice together with vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruits ⁶	1	7	1	7	1	7
Grains (ounce equivalents) ^{7, 8} WGR or enriched	1	10-14	1	11-14	1	12½-14
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a seven-day week</i>						
Calories ^{9, 10}	350-500		400-550		450-600	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories) ¹⁰	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams) ^{10, 11}	≤ 485		≤ 535		≤ 570	
Trans fat (grams) ¹⁰	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
◀ Refer to next page for important menu planning notes ▶						

Table 1-5. Seven-day breakfast meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes**

- ¹ Breakfasts must include the minimum serving of all three components and may include larger amounts if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications. Use the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG) to determine the amount of purchased food that meets the requirements. For processed foods, review the product's Child Nutrition (CN) label or product formulation statement (PFS). For more information, refer to the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) resources, [Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labeling Program](#), [Product Formulation Statements](#), [Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the "Crediting Commercial Processed Products" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage. Foods made from scratch must have a standardized recipe that documents crediting information. For more information, visit the "Crediting Foods Made from Scratch" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ² A week equals seven days. This meal pattern is for schools that regularly operate on a seven-day week.
- ³ Allowable types of milk include unflavored low-fat (1%) milk and unflavored or flavored fat-free milk. Flavored low-fat milk is allowed through February 18, 2022. School food authorities (SFAs) must offer at least two different varieties and at least one milk choice must be unflavored. Whole milk and reduced-fat (2%) milk cannot be served. For more information, visit the "Milk Component for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ⁴ The fruits component includes fresh fruit; frozen fruit; dried fruit; canned fruit in juice, water, or light syrup; and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength fruit juice. Fruits credit based on volume (cups), except dried fruits credit as twice the volume served, e.g., ¼ cup of raisins credits as ½ cup of the fruits component. Pureed fruits in smoothies credit only as juice. For more information, visit the "Fruits Component for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ⁵ For school year 2021-22, any vegetables (including potatoes and other starchy vegetables) may substitute for the fruits component without including vegetables from the other subgroups in weekly menus. The vegetables component includes fresh vegetables, frozen vegetables, canned vegetables, rehydrated dried vegetables, and pasteurized 100 percent full-strength vegetable juice. Vegetables credit based on volume (cups), except raw leafy greens credit as half the volume served (e.g., 1 cup credits as ½ cup of vegetables. A serving of cooked vegetables must be drained. Dried vegetables (such as potato flakes and dried soup mix) credit as the vegetables component based on their rehydrated volume and require a PFS. Pureed vegetables in smoothies credit only as juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Vegetable Subgroups in the NSLP](#), and visit the "Vegetables Component for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Table 1-5. Seven-day breakfast meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

- ⁶ Fruit juice, vegetable juice, and combination juices must be pasteurized 100 percent full-strength juice. Fruit juice together with vegetable juice cannot exceed half of the weekly fruit offerings. The juice limit includes all sources of juice, e.g., 100 percent fruit and vegetable juice, frozen pops made from 100 percent juice, pureed fruits and vegetables in smoothies, and juice from canned fruit in 100 percent juice. For best nutrition, serve whole fruits and vegetables instead of juice. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Juice for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#) and [Crediting Smoothies for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#).
- ⁷ All grains must be WGR. WGR foods contain at least 50 percent whole grains, any remaining grains are enriched, and any noncreditable grains are less than 2 percent ($\frac{1}{4}$ ounce equivalent) of the product formula. The serving size must meet the required weight or volume in the USDA's Exhibit A chart (refer to [Grain Ounce Equivalents for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)) or provide the minimum creditable grains (refer to [Calculation Methods for Crediting Grains for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#)). Menus must meet the minimum weekly ounce equivalents. The maximum weekly ounce equivalents are not required but provide a guide for planning age-appropriate meals that meet the dietary specifications. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Meeting the Whole Grain-rich Requirement for the NSLP and SBP Meal Patterns for Grades K-12](#), [Crediting Enriched Grains in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Crediting Breakfast Cereals for Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the "Grains Component for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ⁸ The meat/meat alternates component is not required at breakfast. SFAs may substitute 1 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates for 1 ounce equivalent of grains after offering the minimum daily grains serving (1 ounce equivalent). The serving size refers to the edible portion of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish as served, e.g., cooked lean meat without bone, breading, binders, extenders, or other ingredients. One ounce equivalent equals 1 ounce of lean meat, poultry, or fish; 1 ounce of cheese (low-fat recommended); 2 ounces of cottage or ricotta cheese (low-fat recommended); $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cooked beans and peas (legumes); $\frac{1}{2}$ large egg; 2 tablespoons of nut butters; 1 ounce of nuts or seeds; $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (2.2 ounces) of commercial tofu containing at least 5 grams of protein; 1 ounce of tempeh; 3 ounces of surimi; $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of yogurt or soy yogurt; and 1 ounce of alternate protein products (APPs). APPs must meet the USDA's requirements in [appendix A](#) of the NSLP regulations (7 CFR 210). Creditable nuts and seeds include almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, filberts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and soy nuts. Nuts and seeds cannot credit for more than half of the meat/meat alternates component. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Deli Meats in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Legumes in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Nuts and Seeds in the NSLP and SBP](#), [Crediting Tofu and Tofu Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the "Meat/Meat Alternates Component for Grades K-12" section of the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Table 1-5. Seven-day breakfast meal pattern, *continued***Menu planning notes, *continued***

- ⁹ The breakfast menu's average daily calories for a five-day school week must be at least the minimum value but cannot exceed the maximum value.
- ¹⁰ Meals may include discretionary sources of calories (solid fats and added sugars) if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications. For information on the dietary specifications, refer to section 6 of the CSDE's [Menu Planning Guide for School Meals for Grades K-12](#), and visit the "Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards for School Meals)" section of the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.
- ¹¹ Weekly breakfast menus must meet the second sodium target. For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Sodium Reduction Timeline for the NSLP and SBP](#).

Meal Modifications for Children with Special Dietary Needs

Schools and institutions participating in the USDA's school nutrition programs must comply with the federal nondiscrimination laws and requirements for meal modifications for children with special dietary needs. These requirements are summarized below. For detailed guidance, refer to the CSDE's guide, *Accommodating Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs*, and visit the CSDE's [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Children with a disability

The USDA requires reasonable meal modifications on a case-by-case basis for children whose disability restricts their diet, based on a medical statement signed by a recognized medical authority. "Case-by-case basis" means that the meal modifications are specific to the individual medical condition and dietary needs of each child.

The Connecticut State Department of Public Health defines a recognized medical authority as a state-licensed health care professional who is authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law. This includes licensed physicians (doctors of medicine or osteopathy), physician assistants, and advanced practice registered nurses (APRN). The CSDE's medical statements and accompanying instructions and guidance are available in the "[Medical Statements for School Nutrition Programs](#)" section of the CSDE's [Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Children without a disability

The USDA allows, but does not require, meal modifications for children whose special dietary needs do not constitute a disability. Examples of optional modifications include requests related to religious or moral convictions, general health concerns, and personal food preferences, such as parents who prefer that their children eat a gluten-free diet or organic foods because they believe it is healthier. SFAs may choose to make these accommodations on a case-by-case basis. Meal modifications for children without disabilities must comply with the meal patterns.

Serving the Same Meals to Grades K-12 and Preschoolers

The NSLP and SBP meal patterns are different for preschoolers (ages 1-4) and grades K-12. SFAs must consider these different meal pattern requirements when making menu planning and purchasing decisions for school meals that include both groups. Foods served to both groups must comply with whichever meal pattern requirements are stricter. The examples below illustrate this requirement:

- The WGR criteria for the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12 are stricter than the WGR criteria for preschool meal patterns. Grain foods served to both groups must comply with the WGR criteria for grades K-12. **Note:** Grain-based desserts do not credit in the preschool meal patterns.
- The preschool meal patterns require a sugar limit for yogurt and breakfast cereals, but the meal patterns for grades K-12 do not. Yogurt and breakfast cereals served to both groups must comply with the preschool sugar limits.

There is one exception to this requirement. SFAs that serve meals to preschoolers and grades K-5 in the same service area at the same time may choose to follow the grade-appropriate meal patterns for each grade group (i.e., use the preschool meal patterns for ages 1-4 and the K-5 meal pattern for grades K-5) or serve the K-5 meal pattern to both grade groups.

SFAs must follow the preschool meal patterns when meals are served to preschoolers in a different area or at a different time than grades K-5. The K-5 meal pattern can be used for preschoolers only when preschoolers are co-mingled with K-5 students during the meal service.

The preschool meal patterns provide the amounts and types of foods that most children need for healthy growth and development. The USDA strongly encourages SFAs to find ways to serve grade-appropriate snacks to preschoolers and older students to best address their nutritional needs.

For more information, refer to [USDA Memo SP 37-2017: Flexibility for Co-Mingled Preschool Meals: Questions and Answers](#), the USDA's resource, [Serving School Meals to Preschoolers](#), and the CSDE's resource, [Comparison of Meal Pattern Requirements for Preschool and Grades K-12 in the NSLP and SBP](#). For detailed guidance on the preschool meal patterns, refer to the CSDE's guide, [Menu Planning Guide for Preschoolers in the NSLP and SBP](#), and visit the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Preschoolers in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Multiple Grade Groups

Some schools and institutions may have different grade configurations that prevent the use of the three required grade groups for the lunch and breakfast meal patterns. Examples include:

- schools where students in grades K-8, grades 5-8, or grades 6-12 eat together during the same meal periods; and
- RCCIs where students in grades 5-12 eat together during the same meal periods.

If the meal pattern requirements for different grade groups overlap, the USDA allows some alternate menu planning options when students from different grade groups eat together in the same meal period. SFAs may use one menu for multiple grade groups only when the meal pattern requirements overlap, and the weekly amounts do not exceed the highest level or go below the lowest level for each grade group. The following three grade configurations meet these criteria:

- grades K-8 (breakfast and lunch);
- grades K-12 (breakfast only); and
- grades 6-12 (breakfast only).

Since the calorie ranges for the lunch meal patterns for grades 6-8 and 9-12 do not overlap, SFAs cannot use one lunch meal pattern with the same amounts of food to meet the requirements for these two grade groups.

SFAs must plan lunch menus differently to meet the meal pattern requirements when students from grades 6-12 eat together in the same lunch period. For more information, refer to [“Lunch for schools with grades 6-8 and 9-12”](#) in this section.



Exception for grade groups in correctional facilities

The USDA allows juvenile detention or correctional facilities (i.e., RCCIs) that meet specific criteria to serve one meal pattern when the ages/grades served span more than one grade group. This exemption applies only if the RCCI:

- is a juvenile detention or correctional facility;
- consists of more than one grade group; and
- has legitimate safety concerns or state juvenile justice laws or regulations related to offering meals with varying amounts of food within the same meal period.

This provision also applies to any other RCCIs that can demonstrate operational limitations to separating age/grade groups and can show legitimate safety concerns if students are served different portions.

RCCIs that meet the required criteria may serve breakfasts and lunches with the same amount of food at the meal service. To ensure nutritional adequacy, meals must meet the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for the highest grade group being served during the meal service.

RCCIs that meet the required criteria may also meet the milk variety requirement over the week rather than daily, if there are potential legitimate safety concerns about offering different types of milk to students. For example, a RCCI may offer all students flavored fat-free milk on some days of the week and unflavored low-fat milk on other days. For more information, refer to “Milk variety exemption for RCCIs” in section 3.

RCCIs must obtain approval from the CSDE prior to implementing this option, by submitting a written waiver request using the CSDE’s form, [Meal Pattern Exception Request Form for Residential Child Care Institutions](#). The CSDE will consider requests on a case-by-case basis, if the RCCI meets the required exemption criteria above. RCCIs that are interested in this option should contact their assigned CSDE school nutrition consultant. The CSDE’s resource, [County Assignments for School Nutrition Programs](#), lists the school nutrition consultants for each Connecticut county.

The grade group exception applies only to RCCIs that meet the required criteria described above. All other facilities and schools must use the meal pattern grade groups specified in the USDA’s regulations for the NSLP and SBP.

Multiple Grade Groups at Lunch

The USDA allows one alternate menu planning option for schools and institutions with grade configurations that prevent students from being separated into the required grade groups at lunch. Examples include schools with grades K-8 or grades 5-8, where students from different grade groups eat together during the same lunch period. This option applies to grades K-8.

When students from grades 6-8 and 9-12 eat together during the same lunch period, SFAs cannot use the same lunch menu to meet the meal pattern requirements for both groups. SFAs must modify menus for grades 6-12 to offer appropriate serving sizes for each grade group. This section provides guidance on these alternate menu planning options.

Lunch for Schools with Grades K-5 and 6-8

Table 1-6 compares the daily and weekly requirements for the five-day lunch meal patterns for grades K-5 and 6-8. Table 1-7 compares this information for the seven-day lunch meal patterns. The yellow-shaded column in each table indicates the breakfast meal pattern for grades K-8.

The daily lunch meal pattern requirements for both grade groups are the same and the weekly requirements overlap. This overlap allows SFAs to serve one lunch menu with the same food quantities to both grade groups.

The meal patterns for different grade groups overlap when the servings, calories, saturated fats, and sodium do not exceed the highest level for each grade group or go below the lowest level for each grade group.

It is important to note that the lunch meal pattern for grades K-8 requires a narrower calorie range (600-650 calories) and more restrictive sodium limit (no more than 935 milligrams) than the individual meal patterns for each grade group. Menu planners must be careful to meet these more restrictive requirements when using one lunch meal pattern for grades K-8.

The four-day, five-day, and seven-day lunch meal patterns for the grades K-8 option are available on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

Table 1-6. Comparison of five-day lunch requirements for grades K-5 and 6-8						
Food components ¹	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Overlap: Meal pattern for grades K-8	
	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) unflavored or fat-free unflavored or flavored	1	5	1	5	1	5
Fruits (cups)	½	2½	½	2½	½	2½
Vegetables (cups)	¾	3¾	¾	3¾	¾	3¾
Dark green	0	½	0	½	0	½
Red/orange	0	¾	0	¾	0	¾
Beans/peas (legumes)	0	½	0	½	0	½
Starchy	0	½	0	½	0	½
Other	0	½	0	½	0	½
Additional vegetables to reach total	0	1	0	1	0	1
Grains (ounce equivalents)	1	8-9	1	8-10	1	8-9
Meat/meat alternates (ounce equivalents)	1	8-10	1	9-10	1	9-10
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week</i>						
Calories	550-650		600-700		600-650	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams)	≤ 935		≤ 1,035		≤ 935	
Trans fat (grams)	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
¹ Refer to the five-day lunch meal pattern (table 1-2) for important menu planning notes.						

Table 1-7. Comparison of seven-day lunch requirements for grades K-5 and 6-8						
Food components ¹	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Overlap: Meal pattern for grades K-8	
	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) unflavored or fat-free unflavored or flavored	1	7	1	7	1	7
Fruits (cups)	½	3½	½	3½	½	3½
Vegetables (cups)	¾	5¼	¾	5¼	¾	5¼
Dark green	0	½	0	½	0	½
Red/orange	0	¾	0	¾	0	¾
Beans/peas (legumes)	0	½	0	½	0	½
Starchy	0	½	0	½	0	½
Other	0	½	0	½	0	½
Additional vegetables to reach total	0	2½	0	2½	0	2½
Grains (ounce equivalents)	1	11-12½	1	11-14	1	11-12½
Meat/meat alternates (ounce equivalents)	1	11-14	1	12½-14	1	12½-14
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a seven-day week</i>						
Calories	550-650		600-700		600-650	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams)	≤ 935		≤ 1,035		≤ 935	
Trans fat (grams)	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.					
¹ Refer to the seven-day lunch meal pattern (table 1-3) for important menu planning notes.						

Lunch for Schools with Grades 6-8 and 9-12

Table 1-8 compares the dietary specifications for grades 6-8 and 9-12. Since the required calorie ranges for grades 6-8 (600-700 calories) and grades 9-12 (750-850 calories) do not overlap, SFAs cannot use the same lunch meal pattern for both grade groups.

One lunch menu with the same amounts of food for grade 6-12 does not meet the NSLP meal pattern requirements.

SFAs must modify menus to offer appropriate serving sizes when students from grades 6-8 and 9-12 eat together in the same lunch period. Schools and institutions that consist of both grade groups must develop menus accordingly to meet the needs of these two separate groups. This section explains the two menu planning options for grades 6-8 and 9-12 eating together in the same lunch period.



Table 1-8. Comparison of NSLP dietary specifications for grades 6-8 and 9-12

Daily amount based on weekly average	Grades 6-8	Grades 9-12	Overlap
Calories	600-700	750-850	None
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10	< 10	< 10
Sodium (milligrams) ¹	≤ 935	≤ 1,080	≤ 935
Trans fat (grams)	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.		
¹ SFAs must meet the second sodium target. For more information, refer to “Limiting Sodium” in section 6.			

Lunch Menu Planning Options for Schools with Grades 6-8 and 9-12

To provide reimbursable meals when grades 6-8 and 9-12 eat together, the SFA must adjust the serving sizes or food components during the meal service so that meals provide the appropriate calories for each grade group. The two options below provide guidance for appropriate meal modifications that meet the NSLP meal pattern requirements for each grade group when students from grades 6-8 and 9-12 eat together during the same lunch period.

With both options, menu planners must be careful to limit starchy vegetables and vegetables or fruits with added fat or sugar, so that the weekly lunch menu for grades 6-8 does not exceed 700 calories. Menu planners must also ensure that the weekly lunch menu for grades 9-12 provides at least 750 calories. Each menu planning option requires clear signage and education for students regarding the food items that each grade group can select. For information on signage, refer to “Meal Identification Signage” in section 5.

Option 1: Increase vegetables or fruits

The simplest menu planning method for SFAs that serve grades 6-8 and 9-12 in the same lunch period is to start with the components that overlap and make minor adjustments to the vegetables or fruits components to increase calories for grades 9-12. SFAs can use the following procedures to implement this option.



Plan 2 ounce equivalents of the daily grains component and 2 ounce equivalents of the daily meat/meat alternates component for both grade groups (6-8 and 9-12). This provides at least the minimum daily and weekly requirements for each grade group.

1. Offer all fruits and vegetables in $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup servings.
 - **Grades 6-8:** Students can select one serving ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) of the fruits component and two servings (1 cup total) of the vegetables component. The fruit is the minimum daily $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup serving for grades 6-8. The vegetables provide $\frac{1}{4}$ cup more than the minimum daily $\frac{3}{4}$ -cup serving for this grade group. Since the lunch includes additional vegetables, menu planners must ensure that the weekly lunch menu does not exceed 700 calories.
 - **Grades 9-12:** Students can select two servings (1 cup total) of the fruits component and two servings (1 cup total) of the vegetables component. These amounts are the minimum daily servings for grades 9-12.

2. Post signage at or near the beginning of the serving line and near the fruits and vegetables components to assist students with selecting appropriate quantities based on the planned menu amounts for each grade group. Some examples of signage include:

- “Grades 6-8: Select one fruit choice and two vegetable choices;” and
- “Grades 9-12: Select two fruit choices and two vegetable choices.”



Table 1-9 shows an example of how to implement option 1.

Table 1-9. Sample daily lunch menu for grades 6-8 and 9-12 using option 1		
Food components	Amounts offered to grades 6-8	Additional amounts offered to grades 9-12
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) unflavored or fat-free unflavored or flavored	1	0
Fruits (cups)¹	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{2}$
Vegetables (cups)²	1	0
Grains (ounce equivalents)³	2	0
Meat/meat alternates (ounce equivalents)³	2	0
<p>¹ Offer all fruits in $\frac{1}{2}$-cup servings. Grades 6-8 may take one serving ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) and grades 9-12 may take two servings (1 cup).</p> <p>² Offer all vegetables in $\frac{1}{2}$-cup servings. Both grade groups may take two servings (1 cup total). Weekly amounts must include the minimum vegetable subgroups for each grade group. For more information, refer to “Vegetable Subgroups at Lunch” in section 3.</p> <p>³ Offer 2 ounce equivalents of the grains component and 2 ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component to each grade group.</p>		

Option 2: Vary grains or meat/meat alternates

This option uses the same procedures as option 1, but varies the serving size of the grains component or meat/meat alternates component on some days to provide larger servings for older students. This option relies more heavily on student education and signage, but provides more flexibility for menu planners. SFAs can use the following procedures to implement this option.


1. Plan 2 ounce equivalents of the daily grains component and 2 ounce equivalents of the daily meat/meat alternates component for both grade groups. This provides at least the minimum daily and weekly requirement for both grade groups.
2. Offer all fruits and vegetables in ½-cup servings.
 - **Grades 6-8:** Students can select one serving (½ cup) of the fruits component and two servings (1 cup total) of the vegetables component. The fruit is the minimum daily ½-cup serving for grades 6-8. The vegetables provide ¼ cup more than the minimum daily ¾-cup serving for this grade group. Since the lunch includes additional vegetables, menu planners must ensure that the weekly lunch menu does not exceed 700 calories.
 - **Grades 9-12:** Students can select two servings (1 cup total) of fruits and two servings (1 cup total) of vegetables. These amounts are the minimum daily servings for grades 9-12.
3. Increase the amount of the grains component or meat/meat alternates component on some days to provide a larger serving for students in grades 9-12. For example, serve an additional ounce of low-fat cheese or another slice of WGR bread.
4. Post signage at or near the beginning of the serving line and near the appropriate food components to assist students in selecting appropriate quantities based on the planned menu amounts for each grade group. The language below provides some examples.
 - “Grades 6-8: Select one fruit choice, two vegetable choices, one grain choice, one meat/meat alternates choice, and one milk choice.”
 - “Grades 9-12: Select two fruit choices, two vegetable choices, two grain choices, one meat/meat alternates choice, and one milk choice.”



Table 1-10 shows some examples of how to implement option 2.

Table 1-10. Sample daily lunch menu for grades 6-8 and 9-12 using option 2				
Food components	Amounts offered to grades 6-8	Additional amounts offered to grades 9-12		
		Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) unflavored or fat-free unflavored or flavored	1	0	0	0
Fruits (cups)¹	1/2	1/2	1/2	1/2
Vegetables (cups)²	1	0	0	0
Grains (ounce equivalents)³	2	1	0	1
Meat/meat alternates (ounce equivalents)³	2	0	1	1/2
¹ Offer all fruits in 1/2-cup servings. Grades 6-8 may take one serving (1/2 cup) and grades 9-12 may take two servings (1 cup). ² Offer vegetables in 1/2-cup servings. Both grade groups may take two servings (1 cup). Weekly amounts must include the required vegetable subgroups for each grade group. ³ Offer 2 ounce equivalents of the grains component and 2 ounce equivalents of the meat/meat alternates component to each grade group, but increase the amount of grains or meat/meat alternates on some days to provide students in grades 9-12 with a larger serving.				

Multiple Grade Groups at Breakfast

Schools and institutions with grade configurations that prevent students from being separated into the required grade groups at breakfast may use the grades K-12 option. This option applies to any combination of grade groups at breakfast, such as grades K-8, grades K-12, and grades 6-12.

Breakfast for Schools with Grades K-12

Table 1-12 compares the daily and weekly requirements for the five-day breakfast meal patterns for grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. Table 1-13 compares this information for the seven-day breakfast meal patterns. The yellow-shaded column in each table indicates the breakfast meal pattern for grades K-12.

The daily breakfast meal pattern requirements for all grade groups are the same and the weekly requirements overlap. This overlap allows SFAs to serve one breakfast menu with the same food quantities to all grade groups.

The meal patterns for different grade groups overlap when the servings, calories, saturated fats, and sodium do not exceed the highest level for each grade group or go below the lowest level for each grade group.

It is important to note that the breakfast meal pattern for grades K-12 requires a narrower calorie range (450-500 calories) and more restrictive sodium limit (no more than 485 milligrams) than the individual meal patterns for each grade group. Menu planners must be careful to meet these more restrictive requirements when using one breakfast meal pattern for grades K-12. For more information, refer to table 1-11.



Table 1-11. Weekly calorie ranges for the SBP meal patterns

Grade groups	Calories
K-5	350-500
6-8	400-550
9-12	450-600
K-12 option ¹	450-500
K-8 option ¹	400-500
6-12 option ¹	450-550
¹ SFAs may use the grades K-12 option for any combination of grade groups at breakfast, such as grades K-8 and grades 6-12. The calorie range changes depending on the grade groups included.	

The four-day, five-day, and seven-day breakfast meal patterns for the grades K-12 option, grades K-8 option, and grades 6-12 option are available on the CSDE's [Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



Table 1-12. Comparison of five-day breakfast meal patterns for grades K-12

Food components ¹	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12		Overlap : Meal pattern for grades K-12	
	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) unflavored or fat-free unflavored or flavored	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	5
Fruits (cups)	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	5
Grains (ounce equivalents)	1	7-10	1	8-10	1	9-10	1	9-10
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a five-day week</i>								
Calories	350-500		400-550		450-600		450-500	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10		< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams)	≤ 485		≤ 535		≤ 570		≤ 485	
Trans fat (grams)	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.							
¹ Refer to the five-day breakfast meal pattern (table 1-4) for important menu planning notes.								

Table 1-13. Comparison of seven-day breakfast meal patterns for grades K-12								
Food components ¹	Grades K-5		Grades 6-8		Grades 9-12		Overlap : Meal pattern for grades K-12	
	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
Milk, fluid (cups) Low-fat (1%) unflavored or fat-free unflavored or flavored	1	7	1	7	1	7	1	7
Fruits (cups)	1	7	1	7	1	7	1	7
Grains (ounce equivalents)	1	10-14	1	11-14	1	12½-14	1	12½-14
Dietary Specifications (Nutrition Standards) <i>Daily amount based on the average for a seven-day week</i>								
Calories	350-500		400-550		450-600		450-500	
Saturated fat (percentage of total calories)	< 10		< 10		< 10		< 10	
Sodium (milligrams)	≤ 485		≤ 535		≤ 570		≤ 485	
Trans fat (grams)	Nutrition label or manufacturer specifications must indicate zero grams of trans fat per serving.							
¹ Refer to the seven-day breakfast meal pattern (table 1-5) for important menu planning notes.								

Additional Foods

If meals include additional servings of food beyond the minimum meal pattern requirements, SFAs must be careful to ensure that the weekly menus meet the dietary specifications. The guidance below assists SFAs with planning meals to meet these requirements.

Extra foods

Extra foods are creditable or noncreditable foods served in addition to the minimum meal pattern requirements. Creditable extra foods are additional servings of a meal pattern component, such as larger servings of fruits and vegetables. Noncreditable extra foods are foods that do not credit toward the meal patterns, such as bacon, cream cheese, ice cream, pudding, gelatin, and condiments. For more information, refer to “Noncreditable Foods” in section 3.

All extra foods (creditable and noncreditable) offered to students with reimbursable meals count toward the weekly dietary specifications. Extra foods must contain zero trans fats and their inclusion cannot cause the menu to exceed the average weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium.

When school menus do not meet the minimum weekly calories, the menu planner must adjust the menu to increase calories to the appropriate level for the grade group. Additional calories should come from nutrient-dense foods, such as more servings of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. The USDA’s meal patterns allow additional servings of any meal pattern component if the menu’s average weekly calories do not exceed the required limit for each grade group. For information on planning school meals to meet the dietary specifications, refer to section 6.

Creditable extra foods at lunch

Lunch can include additional foods from the meal pattern components if the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications. Menu planners must count additional creditable foods toward the daily and weekly requirements. The following examples illustrate this requirement.

- Yogurt planned as an extra menu item at lunch counts toward the minimum daily and weekly servings of the meat/meat alternates component. It also counts toward the weekly dietary specifications.
- A creditable grain-based dessert planned as an extra menu item at lunch must count toward the daily and weekly servings of the grains component, including the weekly limit of no more than 2 ounce equivalents of grain-based desserts. It must

also count toward the weekly dietary specifications. For more information, refer to “Limit for grain-based desserts at lunch” and “Grain-based desserts served as extra foods” in section 3.

When lunch menus include additional creditable foods, SFAs must ensure that school food service personnel receive appropriate training on how to identify reimbursable meals under OVS. The menu planner must clearly communicate with school food service staff regarding how to count these foods. In addition, serving line signage must provide clear information on what and how much students can select. For more information, refer to “Meal Identification Signage” in section 5 and the CSDE’s *Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals*.

Creditable extra foods at breakfast

Menu planners may choose to serve meat/meat alternates as extra foods at breakfast, or substitute 1 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates for 1 ounce equivalent of grains, after offering the minimum grains (1 ounce equivalent). For example, a breakfast menu could include ½ cup of yogurt (1 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates) or 2 tablespoons of peanut butter (1 ounce equivalent of meat/meat alternates) if it also includes at least 1 ounce equivalent of a whole-grain bagel. For more information, refer to “Meat/Meat Alternates at Breakfast” in section 3.

When breakfast menus include additional creditable foods, SFAs must ensure that school food service personnel receive appropriate training on how to identify reimbursable meals under OVS. The menu planner must clearly communicate with school food service staff regarding how to count these foods. In addition, serving line signage must provide clear information on what and how much students can select. For more information, refer to “Meal Identification Signage” in section 5 and the CSDE’s *Offer versus Serve Guide for School Meals*.



Extra servings of vegetables and fruits

The USDA does not limit the amount of vegetables or fruits that SFAs may offer or students may select, as long as the weekly menu meets the dietary specifications. However, all second servings and extra foods are included when a nutrient analysis of menus is required as part of the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs. Menu planners should determine how extra servings of vegetables and fruits affect the menu's nutrient content, and limit extra servings of vegetables and fruits with added fat, sugar, and salt.

Menu planners should consider the types of foods that students are more likely to select as a second serving and determine how these foods affect the nutrient analysis of school meals. Modifying how certain vegetables and fruits are offered can help menus comply with the dietary specifications. For example, SFAs may allow students to:

- choose one or more servings of foods that do not negatively alter the nutrient analysis if chosen as a second or extra, e.g., fresh vegetables and fruits without added fat, sugar, or salt; and
- choose up to one serving of foods that would negatively alter the nutrient analysis if chosen as a second or extra, e.g., buttered corn, coleslaw made with mayonnaise, and fruit crisp made with butter and sugar.



Second servings

If SFAs allow students to take second servings of any component of the reimbursable meal at no charge, these foods must count toward the daily and weekly meal pattern requirements and dietary specifications. Second servings of any food must contain zero trans fats and their inclusion cannot cause the menu to exceed the average weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For information on planning school meals to meet the dietary specifications, refer to section 6.

Second helpings or second meals sold a la carte do not count toward the meal pattern components or dietary specifications for reimbursable meals. A la carte foods are not included in the nutrient analysis of reimbursable school meals.

SFAs must determine whether to charge for additional servings of meal components. SFAs must clearly identify the number of servings of each component that students may take as part of the reimbursable meal. This signage must be located near or at the beginning of the serving line on the serving line and near the applicable food components. For more information, refer to “Meal Identification Signage” in section 5.

The USDA does not allow exceptions for second servings in RCCIs. If RCCIs allow students to take second servings of any meal components, they must count toward the daily and weekly meal pattern requirements and dietary specifications.

Second meals

SFAs can claim only one reimbursable lunch and one reimbursable breakfast for each child per day. SFAs cannot claim second meals for reimbursement but may choose to sell them a la carte.

Second meals sold a la carte do not count toward the daily and weekly requirements, and are not included in the nutrient analysis of reimbursable school meals. SFAs must charge an appropriate cost for a la carte meals based on the USDA’s requirements. For more information, refer to “Nonprogram Foods” and “Paid Lunch Equity” in this section.



Leftovers

Occasional small quantities of leftover food served on another day do not count toward the NSLP or SBP meal patterns. Leftovers should not be planned. The USDA specifies that state agencies will determine whether leftovers are a reasonable amount and are not occurring on a regular basis. SFAs may also freeze leftovers following standard Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) protocols, and serve them first on the serving line the next time that particular item reappears in the menu cycle.

Leftovers served to students as part of reimbursable meals are subject to the dietary specifications. They must contain zero trans fats and their inclusion cannot cause the menu to exceed the average weekly limits for calories, saturated fat, and sodium. For information on planning school meals to meet the dietary specifications, refer to section 6.

Leftovers are included in the nutrient assessment of school menus, when a nutrient analysis is required as part of the CSDE's Administrative Review of the school nutrition programs. If the SFA conducts their own nutrient analysis, leftovers must be included. For more information, refer to "Nutrient Analysis" in section 2.



When SFAs consistently have leftovers to add to each day's menus, the menu planner should consider participation trends in an effort to provide one reimbursable lunch for each child every day.

Leftovers served to students on the same day as they are initially offered are considered seconds. For more information, refer to "Second Servings" in this section.

Menu Planning Resources

The resources below provide general information and guidance on planning meals to meet the NSLP and SBP meal patterns for grades K-12. For detailed guidance on crediting foods, visit the CSDE's "[Crediting Foods in School Nutrition Programs](#)" webpage. For a comprehensive list of resources with guidance on meeting the NSLP and SBP meal pattern requirements, refer to the CSDE's resource, *Resources for the School Meal Patterns*.

- Choking Prevention (CSDE's Food Safety for Child Nutrition Programs webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Food-Safety-for-Child-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#ChokingPrevention>
- Crediting Foods for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Crediting-Foods-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>
- Dietary Specifications: Nutrition Standards for School Meals (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs/Documents#DietarySpecifications>
- Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>
- Meal Pattern Training for School Nutrition Programs (CSDE webpage):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Pattern-Training-Materials>
- Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-School-Nutrition-Programs>
- Menu Planner for School Meals (USDA):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/menu-planner>
- Menu Planning for Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Menu-Planning>
- Nutrition Standards for School Meals (USDA webpage):
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/nutrition-standards-school-meals>
- Resource List for Menu Planning and Food Production in Child Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Menu_Planning.pdf
- Resources for the School Meal Patterns (CSDE):
https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/NSLP/MealPattern/Resources_School_Meal_Patterns.pdf

- Special Diets in School Nutrition Programs (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Special-Diets-in-School-Nutrition-Programs>
- USDA Foods Connecticut Food Distribution Program (CSDE):
<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Food-Distribution-Program-USDA-Foods>

For recipe resources, refer to “Standardized Recipes” and “Recipe Resources” in section 2.
For additional resources, refer to section 7.

Meal Pattern Flexibilities During COVID-19

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, the USDA is allowing sponsors to request specific changes to the meal patterns for school year (SY) 2021-22. USDA's memo, [COVID-19: Child Nutrition Response #91: Nationwide Waiver to Allow Specific School Meal Pattern Flexibility for School Year 2021-2022](#), allows SFAs to request a waiver if they cannot meet the following meal pattern requirements for grades K-12:

- meals must meet the dietary specifications for sodium;
- all grains must be whole grain-rich (WGR);
- menus must offer a variety of vegetables from the vegetable subgroups at lunch;
- menus must offer a variety (at least two different options) of fluid milk;
- low-fat milk must be unflavored; and
- SFAs must plan menus and offer food components for the specified age/grade groups in the stated combinations.

Sponsors must apply to the CSDE to implement any meal pattern changes. If approved by the CSDE, this waiver approval remains in effect through June 30, 2022.

The USDA expects that SFAs will use this flexibility only as needed. The CSDE and USDA strongly encourage and expect operators of the Child Nutrition Programs to maintain and meet the meal patterns to the greatest extent possible, as optimal nutrition is even more critical for children during the current COVID-19 public health crisis.

For more information, refer to “[USDA Nationwide Waivers for COVID-19](#)” in the “About this Guide” section and visit the “[How To](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Operation of Child Nutrition Programs during Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Outbreaks](#) webpage.